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ABSTRACT

Evaluation results for the College Bound (C.B.) program at New York City public schools are presented. The C.B. program seeks to improve reading and mathematics skills of high school students who are 2 or more years below grade level and to prepare these students for college. It includes basic skills instruction in reading, career and college preparation, and intensive guidance services. During the 1984-1985 school year, C.B. programs operated in 22 high schools. Performance measures for reading, writing, and mathematics achievement of full-year and half-year students are assessed in this study, which also focuses on programmatic goals related to process writing. Assessment shows that the program met its reading and writing objectives and its half-year mathematics objective, but did not meet its full-year mathematics objective. Teachers were trained to use the process approach to writing (i.e., involving students in a cycle of pre-writing exercises, drafting, revising, and editing). It was recommended that C.B. should: continue to provide an integrated approach to guidance and basic skills classes, with attention to mathematics instruction; and encourage teachers of subjects other than English to use process writing techniques as a way to increase student writing across the curriculum. (SW)

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OEA Evaluation Report

COLLEGE BOUND PROGRAM
1984-85
FINAL REPORT

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COLLEGE BOUND PROGRAM
1984-85
FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY

The Chapter I College Bound (C.B.) Program was designed to improve the reading and mathematics skills of high school students who were two or more years below grade level and to prepare them to enter college. It includes basic skills instruction in reading, as well as career and college preparation. In addition, it provides C.B. students with intensive guidance services. During the 1984-85 school year, C.B. programs operated in 22 high schools.

This report addresses four performance objectives which measure the reading, writing, and mathematics achievement of full-year and half-year students. It also focuses on programmatic goals related to process writing.

During the 1984-85 school year, the College Bound Program did a more than adequate job of meeting its objectives. The C.B. Program met its reading and writing objectives and its half-year mathematics objective. It did not meet its full-year mathematics objective. These outcomes reflect the successful implementation of a program which provides basic skills and guidance services for a clearly-identified group of students.

During the 1984-85 school year, C.B. expanded its training of teachers in the use of the process approach to writing. Process writing involves students in a cycle of pre-writing exercises, drafting, revising, and editing. Fifteen schools had teachers who used process writing in their C.B. classes. In the 1984-85 school year, S.D.S.s used the manual they had developed the previous year, as well as related curriculum material, as the basis of extensive teacher training. All of the teachers surveyed who had participated in the training rated it as very or extremely useful. Teachers incorporated process writing lessons into materials on such central C.B. themes as career exploration, values clarification, and decision making. The integrated nature of this curriculum reflects C.B.'s general approach, in which, as much as possible, basic skills are taught in conjunction with key student guidance topics.

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that:

- College Bound should continue to provide an integrated approach to its students' guidance and basic skills classes, perhaps turning some attention to mathematics instruction.

- College Bound should explore ways to encourage teachers of subjects other than English to use process writing techniques as a means of increasing student writing across the curriculum.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

College Bound (C.B.) has provided services to New York City high school students since 1967. It was designed to improve the reading and mathematics skills of students who were two or more years below grade level and to prepare these students to enter college. It includes basic skills instruction in reading as well as career and college preparation. In addition, it provides C.B. students with intensive guidance services.

During the 1984-85 school year, C.B. programs served nearly 8,000 students in 22 academic-comprehensive high schools. Approximately 30 students participated in the program in each school. Most students enter the program in the ninth or tenth grade and remain in it until graduation.

C.B. is funded by Chapter I. A school is eligible for federal Chapter I funds if a specified proportion of its student body is either qualified for the free lunch program or belongs to families that qualify for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (A.F.D.C.). C.B. classes use the Chapter I laboratory model; students take a funded C.B. class which offers no credit along with a tax-levy credit-bearing class. Teachers and educational assistants provide individualized instruction in classes of about 20 students. This centrally-administered program provides for teachers, educational assistants, guidance counselors, and coordinators. It also provides for central administrative staff and staff development specialists (S.D.S.s). S.D.S.s visit participating schools at least twice a month to train and assist

teachers, distribute curriculum materials, and collect data.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The performance objectives of the C.B. Program are as follows:

- -seventy percent of full-year program participants will show a gain between their pretest and posttest Normal Curve Equivalent (N.C.E.)* reading and math scores;
- -seventy percent of the participants who are in the program for less than a full year will master one skill in reading for every 20 days of instruction; and
- -seventy percent of the participants in the writing component will demonstrate an improvement in their writing skills based on standard writing samples given at the beginning and end of the program period, as judged by teachers using holistic scoring methods.**

The C.B. Program also has a number of enabling program objectives. This evaluation report addresses those objectives related specifically to the use of a process approach to writing. These objectives are:

- -to provide on-site staff development activities through conferences, workshops, and demonstration lessons for program and school personnel;
- -to review, re-evaluate, and revise program materials based on current educational research and an assessment of the needs of program participants; and
- -to develop reading/writing manuals and lesson plans related to specific themes and interests of individual schools.

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*N.C.E. scores compare a student's test performance to other students in the nation who are on the same grade level.

**A holistic method of scoring writing involves teachers' use of a six-point scale in ascending order of competency.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation has two aims: one is a quantitative analysis of student outcomes and the other is a qualitative description of an important program modification. A primary focus of this report is process writing. Process writing involves students in a cycle of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Peer critique is an integral part of this process. Fifteen schools had teachers who used process writing in the C.B. classes. Training teachers to use the process approach to writing was a major focus of the 1984-85 C.B. Program. In the previous year, program staff had developed a writing curriculum manual and implemented a limited amount of process writing training. In the 1984-85 school year, S.D.S.s distributed the manual and related curriculum material and used them as the basis of extensive teacher training.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The Office of Educational Assessment/High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./H.S.E.U.) used a number of qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the 1984-85 C.B. Program. These tools and techniques included:

- -visits to five schools at which C.B. teachers were using process writing in their classes;
- -interviews with teachers, staff development specialists, and other central- and school-based staff;
- -examination of curriculum materials developed specifically in connection with the use of process writing in the C.B. program; and

-analysis of quantitative data, including attendance and achievement.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

The O.E.A./H.S.E.U. report of the 1984-85 C.B. Program consists of two volumes. This volume contains four chapters. Chapter I includes program background, scope of the evaluation, and evaluation procedures. Chapter II is a description of the use of process writing in the C.B. Program. Chapter III summarizes the analyses of student outcomes for the C.B. Program as a whole. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations. The second volume includes outcome data by school and by grade and is available from O.E.A./H.S.E.U.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The National Writing Project (N.W.P.) in Berkeley, California developed process writing a decade ago; since 1978, the New York City Writing Project at Lehman College has been the N.W.P.'s local affiliate. The C.B. program introduced process writing techniques to its teachers during the 1983-84 school year and introduced process writing as a major facet of the program during the 1984-85 school year.

The process writing approach focuses on the many steps which precede the final essay. It involves students in a cycle common to all writers: pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Pre-writing is an aspect of topic selection. Pre-writing activities can include brainstorming, free writing, and group discussions. Students write a first draft and then revise their work. At the revision stage of the writing process, they can re-organize their essay and add information to it. Students might write several drafts before completing their essays. The last stage of process writing is editing. At this point, students concentrate on spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Peer response and feedback are critical to every step of the writing process. Students can discuss topic selection

with each other, identify what is confusing in a draft, and suggest changes which would make for greater clarity. As a result, students develop a sense of writing as a form of communication with their peers.

C.B. teachers used process writing primarily in English classes. They also linked process writing with the values clarification and decision-making focus which is an important part of the program. Teachers used a variety of writing activities to encourage students to examine critically their own beliefs, as well as how those beliefs affect the decisions they make.

STAFFING AND STAFF TRAINING

C.B. teachers could choose process writing as one approach to use in their classes. More than half of the 17 teachers surveyed had participated in formal training sessions with the S.D.S.s. A few had learned about it in less structured settings. They had engaged in one-to-one discussions with an S.D.S., obtained curriculum materials from an S.D.S., or worked informally with a more experienced colleague. Three teachers had taken the summer New York City Writing Project seminar at Lehman College.

Process writing training was a central part of the C.B. Program throughout the 1984-85 school year. The vast

majority of C.B. teachers had no prior experience with process writing. Process writing training for C.B. teachers started in September, 1984. The two S.D.S.s and one of the assistant program coordinators developed the training component. Originally they gave presentations together, but scheduling problems made this joint training method cumbersome. The S.D.S.s have discussed process writing with all C.B. teachers and coordinators. They have given training sessions, however, only in response to a chairperson's request.

Evaluators observed three C.B. staff training sessions. At one session, the S.D.S. introduced English teachers to process writing. At another, the S.D.S. illustrated how to use process writing in conjunction with values clarification and conflict resolution. At the third, she demonstrated the techniques of free writing and a guided career fantasy.

At Eastern District High School, the S.D.S. introduced all of the members of the English Department to process writing. She offered three training sessions in order to accomodate their schedules. During the sessions, she referred to both Teaching the Writing Process and College Bound Writing Curriculum Manual; C.B. staff had developed both of these handouts. In her discussion of methodology, she anticipated various teacher concerns. She spoke, for example,

about ways to maintain control over a classroom in which students work in pairs or in small groups. She also described how to address students' grammatical problems while encouraging freewriting and creative written expression.

At Taft High School, the S.D.S. met with teachers to discuss integrating into their classes student responses to an improvisational theater presentation. She provided teachers with a handout which illustrated how students could explore conflict resolution and values clarification through dialogue writing, one of the activities which the process writing orientation emphasizes. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade C.B. students then watched a performance of the Family Life Theatre. Its four members acted out skits dealing with divorce, teenage pregnancy, drinking, peer pressure, and teenager-parent interactions. The group's director then facilitated a discussion between the actors and the audience about students' responses to these situations. Several teachers who had previously seen the Family Life Theatre only in the company of other adults were pleasantly surprised at the intense level of student involvement.

At Martin Luther King High School, the S.D.S. did a demonstration lesson attended by 15 teachers. She asked students and teachers to close their eyes for five minutes and fantasize about a career that they would like to have. She then asked them to free write for ten minutes; after

writing, volunteers shared their career fantasies with the rest of the class.

The teachers' survey responses to their C.B. process writing training were very positive. All 14 who had participated in training rated it "very" or "extremely" useful. They most frequently cited their increased motivation in teaching writing as the training's main benefit. Nearly half indicated that the training was very useful as is, and two others mentioned that they would like more training.

CURRICULUM

C.B. material developed in the last two years includes process writing as part of the curriculum. One of the additions to the revised Career Exploration Unit manual, for example, is a section of writing lessons. This part of the 84-page manual includes such basic aspects of process writing as a career-guided fantasy, pre-writing exercises, journal writing, and peer-critique groups. The introduction to the six lessons from the Values Clarification and Decision-Making Unit explicitly connects the unit's educational philosophy and the process writing approach. Its writing-process orientation stresses activities which encourage students to explore their values, assumptions, and

priorities. These activities include dialogue writing, interior monologues, guided freewriting, journal entries and the creation of short dramatic situations.

The lessons included in College Bound Program Writing Curriculum Manual share a process-writing orientation. The manual supplements the program's Reading/Writing Curriculum Manual, which covers such R.C.T.-oriented material as a book report, business letter, and research report, as well as a college-application essay. The supplementary manual consists of three parts. The first contains an overview of peer critiquing, a handout sheet of criteria for evaluating essays, and a peer revision form; it also includes a C.B. teacher's description of ways to teach both reading skills and essay writing, in addition to a series of teacher-developed lessons which build toward students doing peer critiquing in pairs. The second part contains a description of a seven-week project for Eastern District C.B. students which culminated in the publication of a community newsletter (included in the manual's appendix) which dealt with crime, pollution, health services, and transportation. The third part contains a series of teacher-made lessons which use process-writing techniques to teach students to write more concretely, to revise, to learn about and write poetry, and to understand point of view in literature.

The two S.D.S.s developed Teaching the Writing

Process to introduce process writing formally to C.B. teachers during the 1984-85 school year. It contains an overview of the process writing approach, a breakdown of activities, suggestions for initiating writing groups, a feedback sheet for peer critiquing, and guidelines for revising, proofreading, and evaluating essays. S.D.S.s made extensive use of Teaching the Writing Process in their staff training sessions.

CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers of the four classes visited by the evaluation team used a number of process writing techniques. At Clinton, one teacher used a guided fantasy ("If I were blind, I would...") as a prewriting exercise. Students then did freewriting, located the two ideas that would work best together in a composition, and wrote a 75-word paragraph for each idea. The teacher wrote paragraphs at the same time as the students and was the first to volunteer to read aloud. Two other teachers used dialogue writing as part of a lesson on values clarification. Before writing, students in one class imagined a dialogue between themselves and a member of their families. Students in the other class role-played an interaction between a psychiatrist and a character in a play

they had read. At Eastern District, students in one class worked individually to complete their "I Search" term writing project. They used the microfilm of The New York Times published on their birthdays and a personal interview with someone who knew about the world at the time of their birth and/or someone involved in their lives since their birth. They then did a research paper or a piece of creative writing based on the information they had gathered.

The teachers surveyed were extremely enthusiastic about process writing. They identified the most effective process-writing technique as having students revise their writing. They also singled out as consequences of process writing increased student motivation, greater respect for one's work, and closer connections among students and between students and teachers. A typical teacher response was, "anything that doesn't make them bored doesn't make me bored." Several teachers noted that they had observed a marked improvement in student writing since they had begun using process writing. A few teachers mentioned as problems student resistance to revising or to exposing their work to peer critique. They believed, however, that these difficulties were more pronounced while students were still unaccustomed to process-writing techniques. Eighty percent of the teachers surveyed planned to use process writing much more in their C.B. classes than they had done so far. Two-

thirds of those who planned to use it as much as they had been doing were already using it a great deal. None planned to use it less.

III. STUDENT OUTCOMES

College Bound offers reading and writing instruction for full-year students and mathematics instruction for either full or half-year students, depending on individual need. It served 7,788 students during the 1984-85 school year.

MATHEMATICS RESULTS

Nine schools submitted data on 435 full-year C.B. math students. Of these, 30 percent were in the ninth grade, 60 percent in the tenth grade, 8 percent in the eleventh grade, and two percent in the twelfth grade. Complete math test results were obtained for 93 percent of the students. To meet the performance objective, 70 percent of full-year students had to show higher in posttest N.C.E. scores than pretest scores. Of students with complete test results, 59 percent met the evaluation objective by showing an improvement in N.C.E. units. On the whole, students showed an increase of 3.2 N.C.E. units (S.D.=16.3). This change indicates a small effect (effect size=0.20).* A total of 633 half-year students from 11 schools participated in C.B. math

*Effect size (E.S.), developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gains. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units regardless of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S.; 0.5 is a moderate E.S.; and 0.8 is a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered educationally meaningful.

classes. Of these students, 30 percent were in the ninth grade, 57 percent in the tenth grade, eight percent in the eleventh grade, and five percent in the twelfth grade. Seventy-eight percent of these students had complete criterion-referenced test results as measured by a test designed by Science Research Associates for use in this program. To meet the program's evaluation objective, at least 70 percent of students in the program for less than a year had to master one new math skill for every 20 days of instruction. Half-year students in grades nine through twelve surpassed this program objective. Approximately 92 percent of half-year students met the evaluation objective. Students were tested with three skills books. They mastered an average of 8.7. skills.

READING AND WRITING RESULTS

Twenty-one schools submitted data on 7,797 students in reading and writing, 73 percent (5,668) of whom were in the program for the entire year.* Complete test results were obtained for 85 percent of full-year C.B. reading students

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*Results are not reported for students enrolled in the reading and writing program for less than a full year. C.B. students take a reading test which is normed for full-year students. Results are meaningless for students in the program for only part of the year and are thus not included.

and 87 percent of writing students. To meet the performance objective, 70 percent of full-year reading students had to show a gain in their posttest N.C.E. scores over their pretest scores and 70 percent of full-year writing students had to show improvement in writing. Analyses of data showed that 75 percent of the reading students improved. The percentage of students meeting the objective ranged from 66 percent in the eleventh grade to 81 percent in the ninth and tenth grades. On average, reading students showed a mean improvement of 2.7 N.C.E. units (S.D.= 10.1). Eighty-nine percent of the writing students improved. Reading and writing students with complete results attended an average of 89 percent of the time.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the 1984-85 school year, the College Bound Program did a more than adequate job of meeting its reading, writing, and half-year mathematics objectives. It did not meet its full-year mathematics objective. On the whole, these outcomes reflect the successful implementation of a program which provides basic skills and guidance services for a clearly identified group of students.

C.B. also succeeded in expanding its training of teachers in the use of the process approach to writing. In the previous school year, program staff had developed a writing curriculum manual and had implemented a limited amount of process writing training. During the 1984-85 school year, the S.D.S.s distributed the manual and related curriculum material and used them as the basis of extensive teacher training. They incorporated process writing lessons into materials on such central C.B. themes as career exploration, values clarification, and decision making. The integrated nature of this curriculum reflects C.B.'s general approach, in which, as much as possible, basic skills are taught in conjunction with key student guidance topics.

Process writing training for C.B. teachers started in September, 1984. The two S.D.S.s and one of the assistant program coordinators developed the training. They discussed

process writing with all C.B. coordinators and teachers. They did training sessions, however, only in response to a chairperson's request. Process writing was used primarily in English departments. The vast majority of C.B. teachers had no prior experience with process writing. More than half of those surveyed participated in formal training with College Bound S.D.S.s. All of the teachers surveyed who had participated in the training rated it as very or extremely useful. They most frequently cited their increased motivation in teaching writing as the training's main benefit to them.

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that:

1. College Bound should continue to provide an integrated approach to its students' guidance services and basic skills classes, perhaps turning some attention to mathematics instruction.

2. College Bound should explore ways to encourage teachers of subjects other than English to use process writing techniques as a means of increasing student writing across the curriculum.